

South Africa

Facts and Statistics

Location: Southern most tip of Africa, bordering Botswana 1,840 km, Lesotho 909 km, Mozambique 491 km, Namibia 967 km, Swaziland 430 km, Zimbabwe 225 km

Capital: Pretoria

Climate: mostly semiarid; subtropical along east coast; sunny days, cool nights

Population: 42,718,530

Ethnic Make-up: black 75.2%, white 13.6%, Colored 8.6%, Indian 2.6%

Religions: Christian 68% (includes most whites and Coloreds, about 60% of blacks and about 40% of Indians), Muslim 2%, Hindu 1.5% (60% of Indians), indigenous beliefs and animist 28.5%

Government: republic

Languages in South Africa

South Africa has 11 official languages. English is the language of administration and is spoken throughout the country. The other official languages are: Afrikaans, Ndebele, Northern Sotho, Southern Sotho, Swazi, Tsongo, Tswana, Venda, Xhosa and Zulu.

South African Society & Culture

The Rainbow Nation

South Africa is one of the most multicultural countries in the world. In urban areas many different ethnic groups will make up the population. In addition to the indigenous black peoples of South Africa colonialism and immigration have brought in white Europeans, Indians, Indo-Malays, Chinese and many more. As such it is difficult to generalise at all on South African etiquettes and culture due to the diversity.

The Family in South Africa

- . The basic unit of South African society is the family, which includes the nuclear family and the extended family or tribe.
- . In traditional African society, the tribe is the most important community as it is the equivalent of a nation. The tribe provides both emotional and financial security in much the same way the nuclear family does to white or colored South Africans.
- . The colored and more traditional Afrikaans cultures consider their extended family to be almost as important as their nuclear family, while the English-speaking white community places more emphasis on the nuclear family.
- . The nuclear family is the ultimate basis of the tribe. The tribal and family units are being disrupted by changes in the economic reorganization of the country
- . As more people move into the urban areas, they attempt to maintain familial ties, including providing financial support to family members who have remained in the village.

The Rural/Urban Dichotomy

- . There are vast differences between the values of the rural and urban dwellers.
- . The majority of the whites living in rural areas are Afrikaner farmers who are descended from the Calvinists. Their views on the world are sometimes narrow. At the same time they value human decency over materialism.

- . City dwellers live life in the fast lane, which affects their outlook.
- . People from Johannesburg can quite often be regarded as having materialistic values, and being more interested in what you own rather than who you are. They prefer to see themselves as urbane and their country cousins as less sophisticated.
- . People from Cape Town are very proud of their city, and often appear to have a superior attitude about their city versus the rest of the country. Family ties, long-term friendships and social standing are all important to Capetonians.
- . The many rural black communities are still rooted in the traditions of their heritage, whereas the increasingly urban black community combines their roots with the urban environment and international influences that surround them.